

# MIKE OLLEY



## Ozzy not the only 'bull' in Brum

Colourful finger-pointing is sadly inaccurate and insulting at Birmingham's New Street station, according to

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**S**PECIAL thanks must go out to Network Rail for hosting Ozzy the Bull's welcome return to public display in the glorious concourse of New Street railway station.

To get Ozzy into his new spot, it meant moving the bright, brash and colourful finger pointing sign to a fresh location. But in its new spot, I did wonder about the accuracy of the finger posts. Close, but not that close, methinks.

To double-check, I asked Olivia, a cadet ambassador from the Military Preparation College on Broad Street, to go do some properly trained map reading.

Now, if you ever wonder about the youth of today, these cadets will provide 100% reassurance of our bright future.

Olivia happily set out, and using her military trained youthful map reading skills she confirmed that many of the pointers are inaccurate. Oh dear... come on Network Rail, get a grip, misdirecting your public like that is such a shame.

I also noted that the finger supposedly pointing towards Birmingham Cathedral appears as "Pigeon Park"! This has been my church for a quarter of a century.

What an 'official' insult to the Cathedral Church of St Phillips and



Map-reading cadet Olivia; and inaccurate signs at New Street station

the Anglican Communion. Would Network Rail use such base slang for a mosque or a synagogue location? I hope not. While Ozzy is great, he is clearly not the only "bull" at New Street!

■ There was an amazing array of brilliant speeches by our councillors during last week's full council meeting. Even the worst speech was good!

The hotly-debated resolution was on the Israel-Palestine conflict. According to the Geneva Academy, there are as many as 45 armed conflicts currently taking place in the Middle East and North Africa, so you might ask why this particular conflict should be debated. Yet really, it's

self-evident. One of the best speeches came from Cllr Waseem Zaffer (Lab, Lozells). He used no notes, spoke with clarity of thought and talented delivery.

His balance towards Israel was equal to that of Palestine and, frankly, his positive prose supporting the right of Israel to exist was clearly heartfelt and believable. Many others, sorrowfully, didn't achieve that balance.

Another massively striking speech for its courage and delivery, also made largely without notes, came from Cllr Jack Deacon (Lab, Allens Cross), a politician to watch.

And gosh, Cllr Ayoub Khan (Lib Dem, Aston)... was he impressive! His attire was immaculate, combin-

ing Eastern elegance with European style.

Before he opened his mouth he was clearly a stand-out guy, and he delivered what I felt was a sterling speech. There was a modest reference to notes, but with such authority and reference to world figures stating strong positives for the Palestine cause.

Yet the very best speech for depth and pleasantness in delivery came from Cllr Liz Clements (Lab, Bournville and Cotteridge).

Her words really crystallised the debate.

In all, what a great debate, and all of our councillors did our city proud.

■ Birmingham City Council's chief

executive Deborah Cadman last week confessed that one in five people who work AT the council don't work FOR the council.

Ms Cadman, speaking in a web address to her staff, explained that 20% of 'employees' are actually contractors, interim staff, or the like.

One high-profile example of such an interim at the council was recently revealed by Birmingham Live to be HR supremo Darren Hockaday.

Mr Hockaday, officially described as the interim 'people and corporate services director', was said to be earning as much as £1,500 every day and had been in post since 2021. A pretty glorious interim term, albeit one now finally ended.

Non-permanent staff are common practice in developing businesses in the private sector. And there is no fixed recommended ratio between permanent and non-permanent staff.

Industry experts, however, say more interims and similar staff are needed for new and growing businesses more than they are for established organisations.

As we all know, the city council is very short of being an energetic, thrusting, and dynamic new start up.

The council was essentially established in 1838 and has been doing more or less the same thing since then.

Why, therefore, is there a need for 20% of officers to be non-permanent? It's all down to the senior management, I guess...

■ Mike Olley served on Birmingham City Council from 1991 to 2005, when he was made an Alderman.

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